



State of Connecticut
Latino and Puerto Rican
Affairs Commission

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Testimony of the Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission

Appropriations Committee

March 4, 2011 ~ Room 2C of the Legislative Office Bldg., Hartford, CT

Concerning the Governor's Bill No. 6380

"An Act Concerning the Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2013"

Good afternoon State Senator Harp, State Representative Walker and honorable members of the Appropriations Committee. My name Werner Oyanadel, Acting Executive Director of the State of Connecticut Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC); I am here tonight to ask you not to cut or delay the appropriations provided to the Human Resource Development (HRD) and Human Resource Development accounts – Hispanic Programs – which were categorized as low priority programs in the Governor's Budget Summary Report. We also ask you to fund the Nurturing Families Network at non-Hospital Sites; Nutrition Assistance programs; and state funding for HIV/AIDS Assistance programs.

We realize the severity of the budget deficit that the State is facing. We would be remiss however, if we did not point out that it is our Latino community in Connecticut that has been and continues to be disproportionately targeted and underfunded both socially and economically. Although the elimination of these agencies would be consistent with how our community has been treated, it does not help solve the budget deficit, let alone our much higher rate of unemployment, create more affordable housing or improve our lack of access to proper medical care and insurance coverage.

Latinos are the largest and youngest ethnic group in the United States. In Connecticut, Latinos make up more than 12% of the overall population and Latino children make up 16% of the overall student population in our public schools and the poverty rate for Latino children under the age of 18 for whom poverty status is determined by the U.S. Census is higher than 30% – with an infant



mortality rate 1.6 times higher for Latino children than White non-Latino children.

Now that the State of Connecticut is facing an economic crisis unlike any witnessed in generations, the Latino community and the people of Connecticut are looking for their state government to create a plan that will encourage job growth and more opportunities for everyone to reach self-sufficiency. However, we must not balance the budget on the back of the most vulnerable populations in our society. As State Representative Don Clemons (D-Bridgeport) stated last year: "People in our districts are being told by the Governor that they must bare the brunt of the present economic crisis," said Clemons. "Main Street didn't create this economic debacle, Wall Street did, but the people in our districts are suffering the most because of it." These funds represent a lifeline to our community that historically has been denied the resources that many other Connecticut citizens take for granted. While we agree that cuts are sorely needed in order to make the state's budget much leaner and provide for a balanced budget, we strongly believe that a more surgical and strategic approach to balancing the budget is required.

We look forward for the Appropriations Committee to recommend a budget that reflects the fiscal reality but takes into consideration the effects of such changes to our working families and agencies that serve the Latino community. Keep in mind that about a year ago most of these agencies suffered significant reductions to their budgets and that the overall state investment on these agencies represents less than .001 percent of the overall state budget.